

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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R 111215Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7553
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2033

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS PLO LE SA
SUBJ: PLO ATTITUDE TOWARDS CEASE-FIRE

REF: (A) JIDDA 2645, (B) BEIRUT 1717

1. WE HAVE NOTED SAUDI DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER AL-MANSOURI'S
ASSERTION THAT PLO HAD ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD OBSERVE
CEASE-FIRE AND HIS IMPLICATION THAT HE THEREFORE SAW NO
NEED NOW FOR FURTHER ACTION BY SAG (REFTEL A).

2. AS REPORTED REFTEL B, PLO PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON CEASE-
FIRE HAVE BEEN EQUIVOCAL. SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER
MEETING WITH UNIFIL COMMANDER ERSKINE IN BEIRUT ON
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MARCH 28, ARAFAT REFRAINED FROM EXPLICITLY ENDORSING A
CEASE-FIRE AND SAID ONLY THAT THE PLO WOULD HELP THE
U.N. CARRY OUT ITS MISSION OF FACILITATING ISRAELI
WITHDRAWAL. THE SAME DAY FATAH OFFICIAL SALAH KHALAF
WAS QUOTED IN AL LIWA AS SAYING: "WE ARE NOT ISSUING
ORDERS TO CEASE FIRE." AP CITED THE PLO REPRESENTATIVE
AT THE U.N. AS SAYING THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD CON-

TINUE TO "RESPOND TO ISRAELI PROVOCATIONS" AND THAT THE ISRAELI ARMED PRESENCE IN THE AREA WAS "A MAJOR PROVOCATION." Wafa like Arafat said the PLO would facilitate the mission of UNIFIL to help guarantee Israeli withdrawal, but made no reference to acceptance of a cease-fire.

3. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS SOURCES, ARAFAT IN SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS WITH LEBANESE OFFICIALS HERE HAS SAID THE PLO WOULD HELP THE U.N. CARRY OUT ITS MISSION OF ASSURING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, BUT HAS NOT ENDORSED EXPLICITLY A CEASE-FIRE. IN ADDITION, PALESTINIANS OF ALL PERSUASIONS HAVE MAINTAINED PRIVATELY THAT THEY WOULD RATHER FIGHT THAN GIVE UP POSITIONS TO UNIFIL IN THE ABSENCE OF TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL.

4. COMMENT: GIVEN THE PLO EQUIVOCATION ON THIS ISSUE, ANY INFLUENCE THE SAUDI ARABIAN GOVERNMENT CAN EXERCISE ON THE PALESTINIANS TO OBSERVE THE CEASE-FIRE AND 425 AND 426, IN PARTICULAR ON ROLES OF UNIFIL AND LEBANESE ARMY, WOULD BE MOST USEFUL. NOT SURPRISINGLY, IT APPEARS THAT PLO IS CHOOSING TO ENDORSE ONLY THOSE ASPECTS OF UN RESOLUTION (ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL) WHICH SERVE ITS INTERESTS, WHILE IGNORING THE REST. PALESTINIANS NEED TO BE TOLD THEY CANNOT HAVE THE FORMER WITHOUT THE LATTER.

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